

Utilising Secondary Schools Facilities for Adult Learning Programmes in Tanzania: A Veracity of Trances

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Abstract

The majority of Tanzanians acquire primary education, which is actually not enough for manpower production purposes. With this kind of graduates, the country may not be in a position to develop fast unless adult education takes part fully to rescue the situation because primary education offers insufficient required life skills. Adult education has an essential contribution in building social capital, fostering social inclusion and combating both direct and less obvious costs of social exclusion. With increased number of secondary schools in each commune all over the country with at least one education degree holder teacher educator, we believe that secondary schools facilities could be used for implementing adult learning programs to boost social economic development. Interview was conducted to 10 teachers. The study employed interpretative-descriptive analysis to present the data. The paper addresses the extent to which secondary schools can be utilised as adult learning centres. It was found that investing in available human resources via adult education-based courses and activities remains the main engine to provide the needful market oriented and the basic life skills to a growing unemployed community in Tanzania. We suggest that treating adult education seriously may resolve the problems of unskilled work force, unemployment rates to achieve rapid economic and social growth. With adult education, the government may be able to produce a skilled and informed adult population.

Keywords: Adult education, primary education, development, human resources investment and training

1. Introduction

Adult education has an essential contribution in building social capital, fostering social inclusion and combating both direct and less obvious costs of social exclusion. Active citizenship is increasingly seen as essential to reinvigorate democracies under threat from apathy, loss of purpose, widening gaps between haves and have-nots, and a contracting state. Adult learning is an important underpinning for enhancing active citizenship. The world we live is continuously changing socially, politically and economically and hence new challenges arise. These changes require one to learn new knowledge, skills and attitudes every day in order to cope with those changes and challenges. Basic skills and key competencies are now recognised as vital unmet needs for many people in the developed countries as well as in poorer parts of the world. Threshold provision is needed in all member countries. Such new changes include new methods of farming, new methods of trading, new methods of teaching and learning, new methods of receiving and disseminating information, and these influence the methods of teaching and strategies of learning. That being the case, education remains an energizing instrument without which, coping with those changes becomes difficult, and to meet both the National and Millennium Development goals almost equally becomes impossible.

Galabawa (2005) argues that knowledge is the most powerful engine of production; it enables people to subdue nature and force her to satisfy their wants. In support of this, EAEA (2006) opine that the recognition and validation especially of non-formal and informal learning is important in equity, access and labour market senses. The informal learning is the most effective way for anyone who is socially excluded. Everybody

voluntarily or involuntarily keeps on learning throughout life. In actuality, adult education becomes a major means to assist the adult population to attain education. In a society like Tanzania where there is great number of people who are unable to read and write and require adult education programme/courses, allowing secondary schools to accommodate adult education activities provides a strong base for life-long learning in society.

However, there is open evidence that the majority of Tanzanians acquire primary education, which is actually not enough for manpower production purposes (URT, 2008). The big challenge in education is what happens to the learners after primary schooling and recently after secondary schools. Studies have showed that a large number of primary school leavers do not attain the required life skills. A recent study by Uwezo (2010; 2014) revealed that three out of ten primary school leavers cannot solve grade two arithmetic problems, half of them cannot read English and one out of five primary school leavers cannot read even the standard two Swahili text.

However, the Tanzania education and Training Policy (1995) states that “All education institutions in the country shall be designated centres of adult learning”. That is, all educational institutions in the country, including secondary schools should become public learning centres, where their facilities, including libraries, can be open and accessible to the community around them. There could be, for example, seminars, workshops, short courses and evening classes in the schools through which the community around can benefit directly. The same has been stated in the first draft of the new edition of the policy (URT, 1995). Through these policies, education institutions, including secondary schools, are expected to become adult public learning centres that contribute to lifelong learning. The implementation of the said policy statements may increase the function of secondary schools as learning centres of adult education and therefore, widen the schooling chances for adult population. The issue is, while the government’s stipulation is for secondary schools to be centres for adult education activities like any other education institutions, there has not been efforts enough to ensure their effectiveness in promoting adult education activities.

Various efforts have been put in place to ensure that secondary schools operate as learning centres for adult education. Such efforts include the policy statement that all education institutions should be learning centres of adult education (URT, 1995). These efforts are also reflected in the letter from MOEVT dated 14/04/2007, which allowed the use of secondary schools’ facilities in the provision of adult education. The letter reversed the directive from the same ministry prohibiting the use of the same facilities for adult education activities (circular no. 4. of 2002). Circular No. 5 of 2009 directs that district adult education officers should work together with both, the district primary education officers and the district secondary education officer to coordinate issues on adult education in the districts. The circular indicates an adult education officer as a district adult education coordinator and advisor in the district primary and secondary education offices. The effort is meant to provide a wider chance for the large section of youths and adults who miss secondary education to have an opportunity for adult education in secondary schools’ premises.

Despite the fact that there is a need to open secondary schools for adult education activities as it is stressed by the education and training policy, empirical studies which assess the extent to which these secondary schools have been employed as adult education learning centres are limited. Kipingu’s (1978) study for example, focused only on the utilization of military secondary schools as centres of adult education. So far, no study has been done to assess the utilisation of public and private secondary schools for the same purpose. This study therefore intends to embark on this task. The study seeks to find out how adult education programmes are conducted in secondary schools and how school library facilities are accessible to adult learners. It also seeks to find out the perceptions of adult learners and other stakeholders on employing secondary schools as learning centres for adult education.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Overview of adult education activities

The wider benefits of learning are being recognised for their great social and also economic value. They should be taken fully into policy and resource calculations based on the needs of society and individuals. Most of the studies all over the world show that adult education is vital because human intellectual capacity is an important resource to determine the country’s development. The objective of adult education is not only to increase the career opportunities but also to provide new skills, experiences and socialization so that adults can contribute to the wellbeing of their society. To achieve the goals, continuous education has to pay more attention to human resources (Ahmad, Abiddin & Mamat, 2009).

Non-formal education refers to any organized educational activity outside the established formal education system intended to serve specific learning groups. On the job training, rural development programmes, vocational training, literacy, correspondence education and evening classes are some of the examples of non-formal programmes. It is less selective, less expensive and less elitist than the formal education. The programmes are meant to meet specific needs of the society. It is considered potentially and substantially cheaper and more relevant to individual needs than formal education. Thus, non-formal education extends

learning opportunities to many people. The subject of bridging education should be seen and approached from the viewpoint of the learner, with the idea of getting across from one kind of level of learning to another, which has different kinds of requirements. The difficulty about education systems that is mentioned in respect to the integration above applies also, where the rules and requirements of formal systems place barriers across the bridges that learners need to cross (Duke & Hinzen, 2005).

A number of countries have attempted with varying degrees of success to make major transformations in their political, social and economic structures. In those countries, attempts have been made to reorient radically the structure and the goals of the education system, both the formal and non-formal aspects, to support the creation and the maintenance of the new social structures. None of these countries has any policy for, or discussed non-formal education as a separate area of education. Instead, the concept of education has changed. However, the discussion of non-formal education as argued by Evans (1981) is subsumed in formal education. The author paid much attention on how to support it to fulfil the goal it intends; that is, of supportive mechanism of formal education in order to serve the needs of the state.

It is important at this juncture to understand the concept of education in the broadest sense. This includes opening up of schools both physically and conceptually. The clientele for education is broad to include all people of all ages. The methodologies become those of mobilization and participation; and the content of education is expanded to include the values and behaviours that are required of all citizens at work, in the home and in school. Education, in its broadest sense has become a means for mobilizing widespread participation in reorienting personal values and promoting the general development of skills in the entire population (Evans 1981). However, the adult educator is supposed to respect the autonomy of the learner in whatever thing he/she does in the process of implementing adult education programme.

Billett (2001) has looked into workplace as important venue for learning and for improving the effectiveness of workers' skills. According to him, informal learning settings can be part and parcel of adult education, and thus of education in general. Billett's idea of understanding work place as learning centres for adult supports Nyerere's notion of using formal education institutions for informal and non-formal learning centres. The radical tradition in adult education is concerned with social justice and struggle for social change. It is characterized by its emphasis on the link between adult education activities and social action, particularly through collective participation. With the modernization theory, those who had never been to school were required to be provided with knowledge and skills for national development, those who are partially qualified were to be upgraded in order to be more effective in their jobs and to train the educated jobless. The governments by then were the main adult education providers (Youngman, 2000).

2.2 Adult education in Tanzania

The current role of formal schooling in Tanzania is criticized for a number of reasons. First, the organization of schooling does not adequately consider the fact that we live in a changing world, and that, schooling has been confined to a particular age group. Second, schooling has been concerned with the mere transmission of information and facts the students will need to know and do in future (Nyerere, 1968, 1987). This role divorces schooling from day-to-day realities and other sources of knowledge. Third, there has been a growing gap between academic selection criteria and rapidly changing demands imposed by life (Nyirenda & Ishumi, 2002). While learning is a process that occurs throughout life in different ways and forms and is not confined to a particular age or stage in life, it is necessary that schools should change from being merely institutions of instruction to public learning centres (Nyirenda & Ishumi, 2002). However, Tanzania government efforts can be seen in the policy statements insisting on the use of all education institutions as adult education centres and the use of teaching-by-doing methods, there is little evidence on how these have been put into practice.

Regardless of the efforts taken towards improvement of adult education, whether at the barely literate stage or at more advanced levels, it cannot flourish without a good supply of books to read, and that, the extension of library services has been an important part of the programme. The success of supplying enough reading material to the general public is very limited because the supply was never able to meet the demand generated by a rapidly expanding education system (Cameron & Dodd, 1970). At the national level, there has been a serious lack of coordination between the numerous agencies engaged in community development, and an equally serious absence of any carefully worked out local schemes whereby adult education and general rural betterment are linked together (ibid). Formally, Tanzania was able to build up a strong base of rural libraries, rural newspapers, workers' education and radio study group campaigns (Kassam, 1978) though currently the situation is questionable.

2.3 Secondary schools as learning centres for adult education

Since colonial era there have been project and idea of making schools community-learning centres has its roots in the British policy of education (Kweka, 1975). Such projects include community schools, where young people were educated while the school also sought to provide appropriate education for adult members of its

community, thus linking the two elements of education within a single institution and a single system. An example of such projects was Kwamsisi, which was developed by Korogwe College of National Education working with teachers and members of the community (Thompson, 1981).

The project involved the primary school serving as a community education centre by developing two wings of operation. The primary school wing pioneered the reform of the primary school curriculum along community centred lines including study in the four areas of functional literacy and numeracy, citizenship and political education, self-help and cultural activities and community studies. These studies were linked to development projects in the village. The adult education wing sought to provide functional education and training, making full use of the school facilities. In order to build a strong bridge, this would link the formal and non-formal education, sustainably. As Thompson (1981) believes that there should be a major attitudinal shift among the members of the community outside the school. People should not consider formal education as superior to non-formal education.

3. Research objectives

This is a part of large scale on-going research project commissioned by Mzumbe University, in Tanzania. As a part, the main motive to conduct this study was to investigate possibilities of utilising secondary schools as adult education learning centres in Tanzania major cities (Dar es salaam, Mwanza and Arusha; nevertheless, this study reports qualitative findings from Arusha city. More specifically, the study sought to examine appropriateness of secondary schools to be utilised as adult education learning centres; identify reasons of using secondary schools for adult education programmes and finally examine the existing facilities in secondary schools to accommodate provision of adult education programmes.

4. Research questions

In order to address the research objectives of the study, the following research questions guided the researchers to obtain relevant data:

- i. How are secondary schools appropriateness to be utilised as adult education learning centres in Tanzania?
- ii. What are the reasons of utilising secondary schools as adult education learning centres in Tanzania?
- iii. Are there any existing facilities in secondary schools to accommodate provision of adult education programmes?

5. Methods

5.1 Context and Participants

In this study 10 teachers (6 from selected secondary schools and four from teacher resources centres) participated in the study. Of these 6 were female and 4 were male teachers. The study was conducted in Arusha City during teaching practice supervision (August-September, 2014) because it is the time when most of secondary schools are visited in the country. This time most teachers' workloads are shouldered by student-teachers from different Teacher Education College and universities. It was a good time to conduct in-depth interview with experienced teachers. Selection of teachers was based on the number of years one stayed in the same station and having engaged in adult education programmes/courses of any kinds.

5.2 Overview of the design

This is a qualitative research based on interview and does not need to count how many adult education courses present in secondary schools in the area of research or to show cause-effect relationship between two or more variables. It seeks to describe and analyse how secondary school compounds in Tanzania can be utilised as adult education learning centres so as to provide room for a growing number of primary education leavers with appropriate basic and market oriented life skills.

5.3 Instruments

The researcher designed in-depth interview guides that were used to assist data collection process. The designed in-depth interview guides were in semi-structured form, which were used to obtain clear and in-depth information based on theme, however, participants were allowed to express their inner-most views and expand their answers. At the beginning of interviews teachers were given short seminar of about 20 minutes aimed to gauge their understanding of adult education programmes, number of years they saved with the schools, and if they had attended any courses related to adult education. The outcome of the seminar was the selection of 10 teachers who participated in this study.

5.4 Data analysis and interpretation

This study followed the category construction approach which consists organizing the collected data, reducing text and generating categories by finding similar patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The data collected was compared to find consistencies and differences during the analysis process. From data analysis three categories emerged including: appropriateness of secondary schools as adult learning centres; reasons of using secondary schools as adult education learning centres and existing facilities for adult education programmes in secondary schools.

6. Findings and discussion

6.1 Appropriateness of secondary schools as adult learning centres

To be able to get the perceptions of teachers from schools, they were asked to give their opinions on whether it was or not appropriate to use the secondary schools as learning centres for adult education programmes. Eight respondents (80%) out of 10 said that it was appropriate to use secondary schools as adult education centres, two respondents (20%) were unsure. Teachers from one of Arusha city centre secondary school had the following to say:

“...providing any educational skills in secondary schools compound is appropriate because majority of primary schools leavers and form four are not employed due to lack of entrepreneurial skills and spaces to acquire life skills...” (September 21st, 2014 in Arusha)

In support of that another teacher from other secondary schools closer to Arusha market where most of youths are found with no job cemented that:

“...utilising secondary schools as adult education learning centres brings education closer to the community but we need to have a clear policy guideline to avoid misuse of property...and establish who will be responsible and type of adult learners...” (August 26th 2014, in Arusha)

The above contentions are clear beyond doubts that in Tanzania there are secondary schools facilities are closer to community around and could be used to facilitate provision of adult education programmes especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Teachers are aware of the need for education in community since primary school leavers with neither basic life skills nor job have outnumbered the form four leavers with the same character. The two groups could be given extra adult education by utilising secondary school compounds as well as the government be responsible to prepare guidelines for the same. A growing body of literature indicates that the integration of formal education activities with the non-formal education activities is necessary (Iqbal, 2009; Bostrom, 2003). The contention are supported by the findings of the study as shown above that 80% of the respondents considered it necessary that secondary schools in Tanzania are appropriate to accommodate adult education activities.

6.2 Reasons of using secondary schools as adult education learning centres

The study also sought to examine reasons for using secondary schools facilities as adult learning centres. During interview the respondents were given an opportunity to provide reasons on why they thought it is or/not appropriate. It was found that nearly all the respondents were aware that there are technological advancement, economic, political, environmental and social changes in the world, which need all people, including adults, to learn new skills so as to cope. Teachers who had participated in the adult education activities believed that the use of secondary schools as adult education learning centres was beneficial and appropriate way of solving unemployment issues among youths. One senior teacher and former coordinator of teacher resource centres was having the following to provide:

“...education attainment, social wellbeing, close location, good infrastructure, employment opportunity and better life after schools are among the reasons to utilise secondary schools as learning centres for adult education programmes...” (August 29th in 2014)

The contention reflects that, it is vital to prepare guidelines that would be used to facilitate and direct adult training in secondary schools for the adult education. Furthermore, respondents agreed that if the community is offered with adult education programmes near to their residential area it reduces travel and living costs. They further contended that active participation in adult education programmes provided opportunity for people to engage in other economic activities. However, the most interesting was one teacher of social science subject “civics” who argued that:

“...not only for democratic benefit, economic and social cohesion but also sustainability of community wellbeing....these secondary schools would be playing a great role in this country” (August 27th 2014 in Arusha)

The contention above reminds us that in Tanzania secondary schools have enough space that if utilised fully it would bring dramatic changes in terms of democratic and social cohesion. The reasons like flexibility and accessibility; cost effectiveness and availability of teachers, books and other teaching and learning resources were also mentioned by respondents. In a nutshell, some of secondary schools specifically public schools are

currently used as examination centres for adult learners and the same could be used to accommodate provision of adult education programmes.

6.3 Existence of facilities in secondary schools

Researchers asked respondents on whether there existed facilities that could be used to facilitate adult education learning programmes in secondary schools. The study found out that the respondents believed that education is the right of every individual, including adults, and that secondary schools are the best places for adults to learn because there is already existing infrastructure and teachers who can easily facilitate the adult learning. This was evident as one of academic teachers disclosed that:

"...it is good our secondary schools to be used as centres for adult education because they are doing the same task of educating students, the same syllabuses are used, the same teachers and materials can be used. Therefore, they are good places for the adults to learn..." (September 25th 2014 in Arusha)

In support of that a teacher who had attended adult education programmes had the following to add:

"...the presence of already existing teaching and learning infrastructure can help the adult learners to access education easily, while the teachers and the institutions can acquire income through..." (September 23rd 2014 in Arusha)

The argument above indicates that secondary schools have sufficient infrastructure to assume the role of adult education learning centres. Teachers need extra opportunity like that which shall help them to get more income; they need also training to advance their profession for better serving the commune. In regard to teaching resources most of interviewed teachers responded that it is more possible to get reliable teachers, books and other learning materials in the secondary schools than anywhere else and these schools would open more chances for them to learn new skills. The explanation confirmed that existing infrastructures in the secondary schools are important in the provision of adult education programmes. The importance of physical facilities and human resource has been discussed extensively in adult education literature (Titmus, 1989; Karani, 1996). It was found that the existence of good physical infrastructure and reliable human resource boosts the attendance and participation of adult learners in the adult education classes. For example, Nyenzi (2010) and Msoroka (2011) opine that among the reasons that cause drop out of adult learners from the programmes is lack of physical facilities or due to the instructors' incompetence.

7. Conclusion

Despite the importance of adult education towards personal and community development, it has not yet been given the priority it requires. For example, there is no any kind of short course, workshop or seminar for adult population organized or supervised in secondary schools on its own or under the adult education unit. This limits the function of the adult education unit in the city. Expansion of adult education programmes in secondary schools depends highly on government's willingness to provide job-oriented skills to his community members countrywide. On the other hand, such opportunities need to be broadened through other adult education activities. In this study we also found that there is a lack of proper information concerning the meaning, scope and functions of adult education; this seems to hinder its prosperity in the secondary schools and in the city at large. We recommend intentional efforts to be in place by government, private sector, civil organisation and community at large to ensure that every stakeholder in the provision of adult education circle is aware of his/her responsibility, otherwise adult education will remain good for nothing to the people.

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